

**Abstract 275**

**TITLE:** A Woman-Focused HIV Intervention for African American Crack Abusers

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**ISSUE:** HIV infection has been rapidly progressing among African American women in the Southeast, particularly among women substance abusers. Although there is convincing evidence that women's risk differs from men's, there is as yet no data indicating that an intervention targeting out-of-treatment minority women will be effective in changing the drug and sexual behaviors that put them at risk for HIV infection. The risk is particularly high for women who trade sex for drugs, a common behavior in this crackabusing population.

**SETTING:** The intervention takes place in two inner city locations in Durham and Raleigh, North Carolina: one in the basement of an African American church located in an area where drug-related violence has occurred, the other within walking distance of city shelters and soup kitchens. The targeted population is out-of-treatment African American women who currently abuse crack and injecting drugs.

**PROJECT:** The National Institute on Drug Abuse is sponsoring this 4 year study to determine whether a woman-focused HIV intervention can be more effective than a generic intervention at engaging women, reducing their drug use and sexual behaviors, connecting them with community resources, and getting them into treatment. The project has a three group design consisting of the woman-focused group (receiving a contextually rich and culturally sensitive intervention), a standard group (receiving the NIDA standard HIV intervention), and a control group. It includes a rigorous process and a cost-effectiveness study. Details of the woman-focused intervention will be presented.

**RESULTS:** The NC Women's CoOp piloted the intervention with 33 women and began the experimental design in January 1999. To date, 56 women have completed the baseline questionnaire and 10 have completed all groups; one-third are in the control group. No follow-up data is yet available, but two follow-ups are planned. Preliminary data will be presented.

**LESSONS LEARNED:** The NC Women's Coop brings a comprehensive intervention to African American substanceabusing women. In fielding this large community-based study, we had to contend with a number of difficulties inherent in dealing with this population (e.g., transportation, homelessness, childcare, getting them to treatment). Although we continue to work on eliminating these tangible barriers to study completion, we have found that intrinsic motivation may be the more important factor in reducing attrition.

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